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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BANGKOK 002837

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EAP/BCLTV  
PACOM FOR FPA (HUSO)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/23/2015

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [TH](#)

SUBJECT: THAILAND: QUEEN CALLS FOR UNITY AND VIGILANCE IN  
THE FACE OF CONTINUING SOUTHERN VIOLENCE

REF: 04 BANGKOK 8067

Classified By: Political Counselor Robert J. Clarke. Reason 1.4 (d)

[11.](#) (C) SUMMARY: On April 23 Queen Sirikit delivered a strongly worded nationally televised address calling for an end to the violence in southern Thailand. She urged all Thais to work with the government against persons responsible for recent killings and bombings, saying the violence threatens the economic livelihood of the entire country. The remarks were delivered at the Royal Palace in Bangkok in front of a large gathering of Village Scouts and other representatives of nationalist civil defense groups. This speech follows emotional remarks delivered by the Queen on November 16, 2004, where she called for peace in the South, but suggested that direct action needed to be taken to protect the local Buddhist population. END SUMMARY

[12.](#) (C) On April 23 Queen Sirikit gave a stern, at times passionate, 40-minute speech from the Chitralada Royal Palace in Bangkok on the violence in southern Thailand. Her remarks, broadcast simultaneously nationwide by all of Thailand's television stations, were delivered in front of nearly 1,200 members of the Village Scouts and members of other voluntary civil defense organizations from across the country. After delivering the remarks she was heard telling Privy Councilor Surayudh Shulanont that "His Majesty wanted to say this, but feared it would be too strong, so he asked me to speak instead."

[13.](#) (SBU) In her remarks, the Queen said that Thais should not "sit idly by" while violence escalated. She called for Thais to unite in a common effort against those responsible for southern violence, saying that citizens shouldn't expect the government alone to solve the problem. She stressed that she was not asking for Thai citizens to take up arms, but was calling for all Thais to work with the government and serve as "eyes and ears" for security forces. The Queen, echoing recent statements by Prime Minister Thaksin and other RTG officials, suggested non-violent methods be used to restore peace in the South.

[14.](#) (SBU) The Queen focused much of her remarks on the potential the violence had to harm the national economy. She twice mentioned the April 13 triple bombings in Songkhla that targeted important commercial symbols, including the international airport and a western-owned retailer. She warned that the violence could scare away foreign tourists and investors, impacting the entire nation. She noted that the continued violence could have a far more negative impact on Thailand's economy than the December 26, 2004 tsunami disaster. "It will affect the tourism industry and the economy could collapse."

[15.](#) (U) The government's response was, predictably, complimentary of the Queen, with officials promising to heed her advice. Prime Minister Thaksin praised the Queen's remarks, saying that Thais, "should take the Queen's words to heart, and cooperate with Thai authorities by passing on useful information." Interior Minister Chitchai said the Queen's remarks "will be the light to guide our work." Other officials echoed the praise, while urging southerners to provide information about militants.

[16.](#) (C) COMMENT: It has been extremely rare for a member of the Royal Family to speak publicly about an ongoing situation in the country. Historically, the Queen's formal public speeches have been limited to her birthday, yet this is the second time in less than six months that the Queen has made formal remarks about the situation in the South. More unusually, the Palace did not announce ahead of time that the Queen would deliver the remarks or that the audience would be televised.

[17.](#) (C) COMMENT continued: The Queen's remarks -- which we would characterize as reserved, but resolute -- were quite different in tone from her highly emotional November 16, 2004 speech (reftel) where she indicated that direct self-defense measures were required to protect Buddhist Thais living in the South. This time she did not single out the embattled Buddhist population, but instead focused on all the innocent victims of the "brutish" militants, and the potentially

devastating economic impact of the violence.

18. (C) COMMENT continued: While the tone for the Queen's speech was different, her immediate audience for her remarks was the same - the Village Scouts. The Scouts are a nationalist organization, originally organized by the government in the 1970s as a means to mobilize the rural population against the communist insurgency. The Scouts, with over 6.7 million members nationwide, organized a large rally in support of the Government following the Queen's November remarks. Some local observers have expressed concern that the Scouts -- who have a history of violence towards those seen as opposing the government -- could aggravate the situation in the south by encouraging nationalist sentiment among the Thai populace, while further alienating southern Muslims. By keeping the Scouts in the picture, the Queen runs the risk of doing just that.

19. (C) COMMENT continued: The most striking line of the speech seemed to be delivered directly to the Scouts; "I still remember the pledge of allegiance that all of you have uttered before His Majesty the King and myself that you will be loyal to the Nation, the Religion, and the Monarchy, and will defend the country." To Thai ears "the Religion" means one thing, Buddhism. While not explicitly doing so, the Queen could be interpreted by some as again having issued a call to action -- to defend Buddhists. END COMMENT

110. (U) An official transcript of the Queen's remarks was not released. The following is an informal Embassy translation based on excerpts carried in the Thai language press:

#### BEGIN INFORMAL TRANSCRIPT/TRANSLATION

"I invite all of you here today in order to seek your cooperation. I had pondered for a few days before I decided to invite you to meet me today mainly because of my grave concern about the situation in our country, particularly a spate of simultaneous bombings in various places in Hat Yai District, Songkhla province. Hat Yai has had a number of tourists and we have ever benefited from revenues from tourism. If we allow these tragic incidents to continue spreading, our incomes from tourism will dramatically decrease and our national economy will collapse.

I did not feel frightened in the face of massive natural disaster caused by Tsunami tidal waves in December 2004 because it was a natural disaster. But I do feel that the bombings at the airport and elsewhere have severely undermined our economy and affected the overall living and careers of the people.

I still remember the pledge of allegiance that all of you have uttered before His Majesty the King and myself that you will be loyal to the Nation, the Religion, and the Monarchy, and will defend the country. I would like to ask you to take this pledge as "words of truth" that will inspire us to get ready to protect our country. Please don't be a silent force indifferent to prevalent tragic incidents in the country.

Now, our southern provinces have gravely suffered not only from natural disasters but also from abnormal and cruel people who can kill human beings like fish or vegetables as you already know. I volunteered and took the Royal Command (from His Majesty the King) to travel to Thaksin Ratchanives Palace for two months' stay in September and October 2004. His Majesty the King and I normally stay in the southern region for one or one and a half months at a time, but this last time I did not feel like returning (North) at the usual time because I had witnessed the hardship and untold suffering of our people. I therefore extended my stay up to 2 months. I have always asked for cooperation from all of you, from the government and private sectors as well as NGOs who attended a previous gathering at this Dusitdalai Hall (in November 2004), to brainstorm and extend our heartfelt support and assistance to our sisters and brothers in the 3 southern provinces in order to comfort them with our concern and understanding of their sufferings.

But there still remains outbursts of violent incidents against authorities and villagers, who have shared the same destiny. The most recent ones were the bombing at the international airport in Hat Yai District, Songkhla province, and simultaneous bombings of a department store and a hotel in the province, resulting in several deaths. It is evident that this group of inhumane persons has intentionally killed the innocent without caring whether they are women, elderly, or children. This is evidently an act of brutes who have no religion, no morality, no humanity, and who are capable of doing violent and cruel things that normal people cannot. These people have no sympathy for anyone else. I believe these people not only deliberately intended to kill others but have also conspired against the country. For such unabated violent incidents would give our country an

unattractive and poor look and scare away visitors who could not possibly feel safe in the face of incidents of bombings. I therefore think it is now time for me to talk clearly to you about the grave dangers now plaguing Thailand, especially the persistent bombings which damage the Thai economy and tourism despite the rich and beautiful national resources found in Thailand.

When I hear lately about an increase in daily killing from one to 4-5 cases a day, and recently about even more frequent bombings, I feel that our country is in real danger. I am reminded of your pledge to defend the country and the Thai people uttered before His Majesty the King at a time when I don't know who else to turn to for help.

I have no specific proposal, and never think of mobilizing all of you to take up weapons to kill anyone, because we are all Thai compatriots and not duty-bound to suppress one another with arms. I would merely like to ask you not remain idle, for your idleness could do great harm to the country. Rather, we must show that we realize the dangers facing the country and demonstrate understanding of years of suffering by our southern compatriots. I think it is the Thai people's duty to defend the country and jointly condemn these inhuman and cruel acts of assaulting and killing innocent people at Thailand's expense. We must also be silently vigilant and act like ears and eyes for state authorities to monitor any unusual activities.

We must help keep our compatriots from getting killed, injured, maimed and being prevented from working for their livelihood. We all have to protect all official properties procured with taxes from the people. All Thais and the armed forces have to preserve legal sanctity by non-violent means in order to restore peace to the south as soon as possible so that our brothers and sisters in the south can live safely and normally pursue their occupations. In so doing, we can unify our efforts and thinking and combine forces to denounce any hostile act that could gravely affect the country. We cannot simply stay idle, as we have already pledged to defend the country. If we are able to comply with our pledge, every sector will be happy because of our mutual care.

You should try to think and consult among you to determine whether it is time and appropriate for all of us to be united and not to stay idle or silent regardless of any bombing or whatever happens. We cannot just leave these responsibilities solely to the government but must join forces to help one another and protect Thailand without holding any weapon. I really hope that all of you who vowed to defend the country, and on whom I have pinned much hope, will unite your efforts to defend your country, to show your gratitude to your homeland, and to build the country for our new generations."

END INFORMAL TRANSCRIPT/TRANSLATION  
BOYCE